

***Testimony Supporting***

*HB 6616: "An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status"*

*February 9th, 2023*

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Caroline Tanbee Smith, and I am a resident of the City of New Haven.

I stand in strong support of **HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status**.

Like a sturdy roof over our heads and meals on our dining room tables, healthcare is an essential, basic need that sets individuals up for long-term safety, stability, and success. Connecticut has long been proud to be a haven for individuals entering into America. These include individuals who have the same desires and dreams as so many of us: To build a safe and stable home for their families, as well as become contributing neighbors in their communities. As a state, we ought to see it as our priority and our responsibility to ensure we are providing the pillars of support to be a welcoming place to land and ensure those dreams are within reach for everyone.

And not only that, but having access to healthcare also builds a foundation for individuals and families to build businesses, innovate, and give back directly into their communities.

For the past five years, I have had the privilege of working alongside entrepreneurs across New Haven and Connecticut through my work. Connecticut has long been a state of builders and innovators; individuals and teams with the will and courage to take a risk on behalf of their community. Despite being only 12.9% of the population, immigrants account for 28% of the new business creation in the country. And, in Connecticut, 19% of all business owners are new immigrants. In my experience sitting right across the table from hard working entrepreneurs, it is clear the role that access to essential needs — such as housing, healthcare, childcare, and food — has in an entrepreneur's ability to build a business that can sustain themselves, create local jobs, and build wealth for the neighborhood. Providing a bedrock of these supports is key to how an inclusive, locally-driven innovation and entrepreneurship economy can truly blossom in Connecticut.

I strongly support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age. Sincere thank you for reading and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Caroline Tanbee Smith